

P 181557Z MAY 09  
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8506  
INFO AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN PRIORITY  
AMCONSUL DURBAN PRIORITY  
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 001004

DEPT FOR AF/S - MARBURGJR AND FIERSTPD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/18/2019  
TAGS: PREL SF SU  
SUBJECT: GOSS REPRESENTATIVES TALK POLITICS AND SOUTH  
AFRICA'S ROLE IN SUDAN

Classified By: Political Counselor Raymond L. Brown. Reasons 1.5  
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) Southern Africa Liaison Office representatives delivered a message to Poloff intended to "counteract Khartoum's propaganda." They discussed the political situation in Sudan and South Africa's role. They are optimistic about South Africa's engagement with the GOSS under President Zuma's leadership. So far the Zuma administration has indicated no major shifts in foreign policy. End summary.

¶2. (C) Diplomatic Affairs Officer Killa Janda and Information Officer Peter Bio Alier requested a meeting with Poloff to brief on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and challenges to its implementation; peace and war in Darfur and the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir; and matters of mutual interest. Janda and Alier expressed appreciation for U.S. efforts to secure peace in Sudan and for the work of Special Envoy Scott Gration. Regarding the ICC indictment, Janda argued that al-Bashir should take responsibility for Darfur. She regarded the argument that the indictment threatened the CPA as propaganda because "Khartoum is totally unprepared for war." She described the impact of the indictment as "more psychological than anything else." Janda and Alier said the indictment provided the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM) an opportunity to unite and lead the "marginalized" peoples of Sudan. In terms of the GOSS' strategic value to the U.S., they mentioned shared counterterrorism goals.

¶3. (C) Janda and Alier described South Africa's role in the Sudanese conflicts as "crucial" and they initially feared that Zuma might focus on domestic issues to the detriment of foreign policy. Janda described the African National Congress (ANC) and South African Government (SAG) as "revolutionary in their outlook," which she said explains the kinship between ANC liberation fighters and SPLM leaders. Janda touted the large SPLM delegation (she claimed there were six members) who attended President Zuma's inauguration as proof of close ties. She also mentioned that GOSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit met with Zuma during that visit. Based on discussions with SAG and ANC contacts, Janda is convinced that the Zuma administration will continue to pursue a "very strong" African agenda. In her view, the ANC didn't have a problem with Mbeki's African agenda, but his lack of consultation with ANC leaders. She said SAG officials had given her their top three foreign policy priorities: Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Sudan, with a stronger leaning towards the needs of South Sudan. Janda believes Zuma's focus on domestic sectors that were neglected under former President Thabo Mbeki will translate into SAG engagement with Africa's poor because Zuma "is not trying to behave as a sophisticated politician rather he is a man of the people and he cares about Africa." She also thinks Zuma will pressure the parties to conflicts to abide by agreements and she doubts he will tolerate delays. Janda added, "We are optimistic" about foreign policy under Zuma's leadership.

¶4. (C) Signaling no major shift in the SAG's Sudan policy, during a media interview on May 14, the new Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Maite Nkoana-Mashabane reiterated the long-standing SAG objection to the indictment of al-Bashir. She said his arrest would not solve the country's problems and added, "We know of many other not so democratic leaders around the world who are not being taken to the Hague." Institute for Security Studies analyst Paula Roque thinks there will not be disengagement on foreign policy issues under Zuma, but that policy differences under Zuma will be internal. She does not believe there will be a change in SAG policy on Sudan unless the CPA collapses or the referendum goes wrong. Roque noted that the SAG is already planning for post-referendum relations with the GOSS by opening a consulate in Juba in April 2009. She said South Africa is concerned with the precedence that Sudan sets for Africa. She mentioned business interests in Sudan of high-ranking ANC members, including Minister of Human Settlements Tokyo Sexwale. Roque affirmed the "natural affiliation" between the ANC and SPLM. She agreed that Zimbabwe, DRC and Sudan were the SAG's top three priorities, at least until a country considered more important erupts.

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